

SUR, GDR, M. Hillerbrand et al.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: January 22, 1960

SUBJECT: Conversation Between Chairman Khrushchev and German Ambassador Kroll MM

PARTICIPANTS: Mr. Peter Krapf, Minister, German Embassy
Mr. Ivan R. White - EUR
Mr. Martin J. Hillerbrand - GDR

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During a conversation which also covered other subjects (see separate memorandum of conversation) Minister Krapf gave an account (reading from a telegram received by the Embassy) of the recent conversation between German Ambassador Kroll and Chairman Khrushchev which took place on January 18 at the request of Khrushchev. In his report Kroll noted that the atmosphere was somewhat different than at the New Year's Party in which Ambassador Thompson was involved. On the whole Khrushchev's attitude was friendly, but Kroll did not attach too much importance to this fact.

Khrushchev began by taking a rather positive line regarding the prospect of developing friendly bilateral relations between the Soviet Union and the Federal Republic. He said he was interested in intensifying cooperation in scientific and technical fields as well as increasing the exchange of persons. Kroll reported that he had the impression Khrushchev might be hinting at his desire to visit the Federal Republic at a later date, though he did not specifically say so.

Khrushchev described disarmament as the "problem of problems" facing the world. He referred to his recent speech to the Supreme Soviet, and expressed the hope that other countries would follow the example of the Soviets in reducing the strength of their forces. As a follow-up action to this reduction, Khrushchev continued, the Soviets intended to withdraw their forces altogether from Poland and Hungary as well as to reduce their

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strength in the GDR considerably. At a later date they intended to withdraw their forces entirely from the GDR. He noted that, in the West one might be astonished by these measures, since he had the impression that the Western Powers believe that the present system in the GDR is maintained only by Soviet bayonets. The Soviets would be willing to assume the risks involved in withdrawal of all their forces. If later, contrary to Soviet expectations, the people of the GDR decided in favor of a non-Socialist regime, the Soviets would accept this decision.

Although he believed the disarmament problem had priority before all other problems, Khrushchev added, the Soviets could not neglect the problem of Berlin and the peace treaty at the Summit meeting. He still believed that the Soviet proposal for a free city was a good one and would serve the interests of the Berlin population. He would, however, also accept some sort of a temporary settlement if such a settlement were connected with abolition of the occupation status. However, if negotiations at the Summit led to no agreement on Berlin, he would proceed to the conclusion of a peace treaty with the GDR, which would lead to the well-known consequences. He noted that the Soviets had discussed this matter with the other Communist governments, and he was certain they would join with the Soviet Union in signing such a peace treaty. In response to Kroll's question Khrushchev said he believed the Yugoslavs would also join in signing such a treaty, but he was not quite sure.

Khrushchev went on to say that he could not accept the Western thesis that the Berlin problem could only be solved in connection with German reunification, any more than he could accept the contention that a peace treaty must be linked to reunification. He could not understand why the Federal Republic opposed a peace treaty. If the border issue lay at the bottom of this attitude he wished to point out that a change of the present Eastern borders of Germany could practically only be achieved through war. Since the Federal Republic has repeatedly taken the public position that it did not envisage such a solution to the border question, he could not understand why the Federal Republic alleged this issue for opposing a peace treaty fifteen years after the end of the war. No one expected the Federal Republic formally to recognize the present borders, something done somewhat surprisingly according to Kroll. He had great understanding for this policy of the Federal Republic, although he did not like to attack Chancellor Adenauer personally in his speeches, merely his policies. He had the greatest respect for the Chancellor, and believed in a policy of trust.

Nevertheless, the Soviets could not accept the provocative speeches made by various German leaders without responding to them. However, he was willing to agree to a further truce.

At this point, apparently, the conversation terminated.

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